

In the claims:

Please amend the claims as shown below:

1. (Currently amended) A method for the treatment of chips,
5 comprising:

heating the chips with steam in a steam treatment inside a
steam treatment vessel,

directly adding an acidic fluid to the chips disposed in the
steam treatment vessel while the chips are being steamed in
10 the steam treatment vessel in an amount that gives the chips
at least a five-fold increase in an ionic concentration of
hydrogen ions at an end of the steam treatment compared to
steam treatment without adding the acidic fluid,

in the steam treatment vessel, heating the chips together with
15 the acidic fluid by the steam for a period of 1-20 minutes,
reducing a final pH of the chips by at least 0.5 units,
the chips falling down through a chute connected to the steam
treatment vessel,

adding an alkali impregnation fluid to the chute while the
20 chips fall therethrough,

forming the chips to a slurry in the chute with an the alkali
impregnation fluid,

conveying the slurry to a digester, and
cooking the chips in the digester.

25 2. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1
wherein the acidic fluid has a pH that does not exceed 4 and
the acidic treatment fluid is at least partially added in a
pressurized steam treatment vessel, at a pressure in the
30 vessel that exceeds that of a surrounding atmosphere by at
least 0.5 bar.

3. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1
wherein the acidic fluid has a pH that does not exceed 4 and

the acidic treatment fluid is partially added at least in a vessel at atmospheric pressure or at a slightly higher pressure, at a pressure in the vessel that exceeds that of a surrounding atmosphere by between 0 and 0.5 bar.

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4. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 2 wherein a volume of the added acidic fluid relative to a volume of the chips does not exceed 2:1.

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5. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein the alkali impregnation fluid in which the heated and acidified chips are formed into a slurry is constituted by a sulphide-rich liquor.

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6. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 5 wherein the alkali impregnation fluid is constituted by a mixture of at least one of a sulphide-rich white liquor, sulphide-rich black liquor, and/or sulphide-rich green liquor, and the alkali impregnation fluid has a molarity of HS^- that exceeds 0.15 mol/liter.

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7. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 6 wherein the alkali impregnation fluid has a molarity of NaOH that does not exceed 0.75 mol/liter.

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8. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1 wherein the heating by steam of the chips together with the added acidic fluid takes place during a period of 1-20 minutes and at a temperature in a range of 80-120°C.

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